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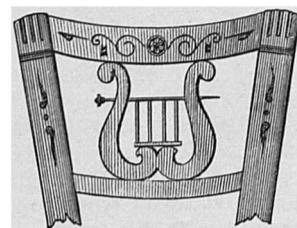
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ODDS AND ENDS,
WITH PEN AND PENCIL.

Our pianos and other domestic musical instruments are not, as a rule, conspicuously beautiful pieces of furniture, but they might easily be rendered so. The makers of piano cases follow about half a dozen trite models which have come to be about as conventional as kitchen chairs, and have but recently become acquainted with the fact that the large bare spaces of a piano case require some offset of ornament. A pretty and rather unpretending bit of decoration caught my eye and my fancy the other evening, in the ebony case of an upright piano. The decoration consisted in an inlaid pattern of white wood, extending along the face of the upright portion of the piano, above the keyboard, and representing a branch of leaves and blossoms, on which birds were swinging and singing. The decoration was simple, graceful, and, as it had a musical significance, appropriate. Here, too, is a hasty outline of a chair back, particularly well suited for a piano chair or a music room. The material of the chair is rosewood and the strings of the lyre are slender rods of brass. Of course some little details require to be added, but as I sketched the above outline when the owner was not looking—though I don't think I infringed any copyright by so doing—I had not time enough to elaborate these details. The chair is not beautiful; it savors too much of what a recent writer inveighed against as "the great classical fallacy," for that; but it is original, odd, and appropriate.



"This is just the kind of thing that I enjoy," said Edwin H. Blashfield the other day, as he beamed down upon the writer from the top of a step-ladder, and turned his back to a big canvas on which he was laying paint in good earnest.

"What is it?" I said, backing into an unfinished picture in the effort to place a proper focal distance between myself and his new work.

"It's a ceiling for a Fifth Avenue house; cupids sporting in the air with lengths of ribbon blowing about them and wreathing about their arms and legs, and sky and clouds showing behind them. Strikes you as rather cold in color, doesn't it? Well, there's a reason for that; the flagstones and granite pavements of the street reflect a great deal of strong, hot light through the windows, and upon the walls and ceilings, and it is, therefore, necessary to counteract that effect by keeping the tone of the picture somewhat low and cool. That blue that I am using in the sky looks very deep, but when the glare strikes on it through the windows, or when the yellow gaslight is thrown against it, the effect will be to change the color into a close approximation to the real hues of the sky."

"You seem to have more decorative work than pictures on hand just now."

"Yes, I like this work, and I find that a great many of the artists who formerly gave their exclusive attention to pictures are now giving much attention to decorative designs. In Europe an artist has a chance, now and then, to furnish a colossal painting for a town hall, a church, or some building or room much used by the people, but in America there is no governmental patronage of art, and we have to limit our pictures, both in size and subject, to meet the private demand. After long painting on small canvases, it is a kind of luxury to spread one's paint and ideas on such a generous scale as this, or to undertake interior decorations where we can have a whole parlor for a canvas. Here, by the way, is an idea of mine for dining-room decoration, the examples shown in this model being so amplified as to apply, not alone to wines, which these figures represent, but to game, fruits and perhaps the various courses of a dinner."

Mr. Blashfield's idea is indicated by his sketch, herewith appended. The room is to be furnished in oak with panels, alternately round and oblong, the round ones to contain ideal heads and the larger panels to be filled with symbolic figures. In this instance the figures stand for red wine, Rhine wine and champagne. Graceful and imaginative pieces of work, they are, and so colored, in the matter of costumes and accessories, as to hint at the color and attributes of the wines they represent. Bubbles playing about the figure of champagne would almost reveal the meaning of that picture at the first glance.

In certain Spanish towns and cities—Lisbon, I believe, is one of them—and in many churches and cathedrals in Mexico, colored tiles, in some cases richly ornamented, form a complete outside coating to the structures. A tile front, in place of a brick, stone or iron one, would form a startling episode in our sombre American streets, but with bright sunlight playing over it and green trees waving near, with perhaps a parterre of flowers and a fountain in front, the effect would be far from disagreeable. Tiles would be superior to iron in that they would not rust; superior to brick and stone in that they would not collect dust, or, collecting it, would lose it with the first shower, and would never change their color. Ruskin, you know, says that porcelain will hold its colors while the Pyramids stand. Tiles are already in much use for ornamenting little strips and odd corners in the fronts of buildings, but the coating of an entire house with them is a daring idea. Who will be the first to act on it in New York?

Not often do we see rooms completely decorated by hangings, either in plush or tapestries, yet the effect of such decor-

ation is chaste and beautiful, and a room so equipped relieves the decorator of much perplexity regarding the maintenance of color, harmony and tone. Examples are not wanting, either, to show that hangings can be and are used with fine effect. George A. Sala, that most sprightly of English journalists, describes one that he saw in Paris that is charming enough to be adopted immediately by some of our wealthy house builders, for it would make a boudoir such as few ladies in this land possess, and yet its cost would not be excessive. This room resembles a tent of sea-green velvet edged with heavy bullion fringe and tassels, and gathered in the centre of the ceiling by an ornamental circlet from which hangs a large ball of green chenille. There are no wooden doors leading from this apartment, hangings of damask being used to cover the portals. The furniture of the room comprised an oxidized silver table, in tripod form; a Renaissance easel, bearing a portrait; cabinets filled with bric-a-brac; chairs, *fauteuils* and foot stools, and a carved, gilded and canopied bed dressed in a sky blue satin counterpane lined with pale pink and pillows edged with lace. The carpet is of triple velvet pile. Says Mr. Sala: "The scheme of color is wonderfully subtle. The effect is as though, turning from the frame of dark green drapery, with its beamy lights and reflections, you were gazing at a warmly lit boudoir. It is a selenograph combined with an *effet de lampe*." Now here is a picture to make your mouth water. Some of our decorators would do well to study the suggestions embodied in it.

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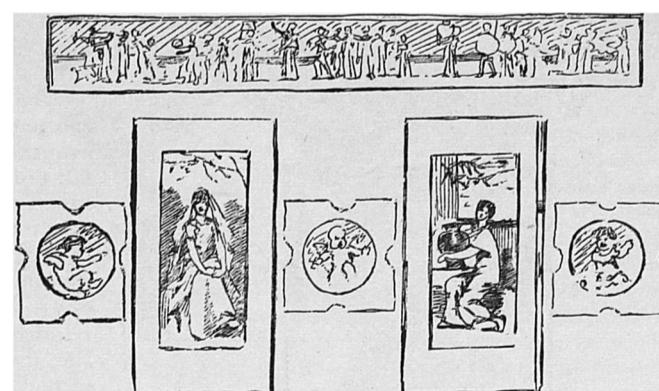
A rather bright piece of home-made decoration, intended to ameliorate the bareness of a new flat, is to be seen in a New York parlor, and is worth making a note about. The broad projecting wall about the fire-place, which marks the situation of the chimney, is almost covered with crimson velvet, put on in lieu of paper, and edged with a narrow, convex strip of gilded molding, which, probably, keeps the velvet in its place. Outside this strip is a border of flowered satin, dull yellow in color, but with blossoms marked upon it in their natural tints. The centre of the panel is occupied by a quaint mirror of Venetian glass with glass frame and sconces appended to it. The mirror, the frieze, the satin border and the articles of *veru* on the mantel prevent the color of the velvet from asserting itself too strongly, as would be the case were the room comparatively empty of other decorations. The general furnishing of the room is in crimson and old gold, with intermediate and related shades tending toward a harmony of these colors.

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The promenader along Fifth Avenue and Broadway has often noticed, if he stops to look at anything in shop windows, the lustrous bits of oxidized gold and silver in the jewelers' stores: beetles, spiders, dragon flies, daggers, combs, and nobody knows what else, that shine with beautiful metallic tints, red, crimson, green, blue, yellow and orange. I have seen the thinnest gold leaf exhibit prismatic effects when acted on by chemicals and gases, and I wonder if the same effects cannot be produced in the gold patterns of wall papers. The man who can make a wall paper with steel blue dragon flies, red and orange butterflies, and green and gold beetles or humming birds in the pattern, all in lustrous metallic colors, can probably sell his first rolls of paper for enough money to start a hotel. A very little experimenting with the effects of chemical washes on gilded figures would, at all events, demonstrate whether the manufacture of wall paper so beautiful as this would be were feasible or not.

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I am sure that people who reside in smoky towns like Pittsburg and Cincinnati, and people who ride much in railroad cars, whether they occupy Pullman and Wagner coaches or not, will rejoice to know that a smoke and cinder consumer



[Project for mural decoration of a dining room; processional frieze, medallions of babies, and panels of figures representing wines.]

has been invented which attends to its business so strictly that an engine to which it is affixed does not give off smoke enough to soil a handkerchief. Housekeepers whose paint, paper, carpets and upholstery grow dingy before they show signs of wear, and railroad travelers who are made to look like coal heavers after a hundred mile ride ought to petition for the immediate introduction of this invention. As to the railroad companies, it would seem to be not less to their interests than their passengers, that smoke consumers should be placed upon their locomotives, for railroad cars, especially the sleeping, dining and parlor cars that are run upon most lines, are handsome affairs—much too handsome to lose all the color and beauty of their furnishing and decoration in a cloud of grime.

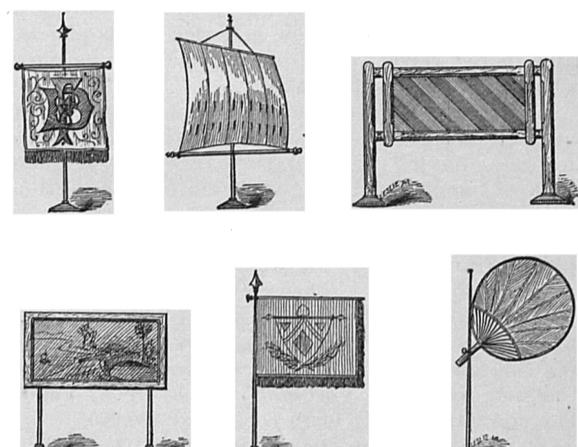
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Figures painted for friezes and panels are commonly painted upon wood or canvas, but leather is sometimes used for that purpose with excellent effect. Leather is as smooth as wood and suggests durability better than canvas, and the colors do not appear to sink as they do when laid upon cloth. A rather good effect, that is considered as decoration, I saw re-

cently in a painting on leather, where a small, ornate pattern stamped on the surface had been allowed to show here and there in the drapery of a woman's figure that formed the subject of the picture. The owner thought so much of this picture that he put it into an elaborate frame and hung it in his parlor. As pictorial art it was hardly legitimate, but as decorative art it was striking.

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In reading we should have the light partially behind us so as to fall over our shoulder, but sometimes the shape of our rooms or the form and arrangement of our chairs and tables compel at least a portion of the family circle, as they sit around the evening lamp, to have the light beside or partially in front of them. For the relief of readers thus circumstanced might not a little screen, or banneret, or some other movable shade be contrived which should keep the light from shining into the eye, thus hurting or tiring the sight? It is all very well to say, "Put a metal shade around the lamp," but a person of small stature, or one sitting on a low chair is still in the line of the lamp's rays and may feel very hot and swollen about the eyes after an hour's reading, and, besides, an opaque shade about a lamp, or drop light, shuts out illumination from the rest of the room and leaves it in a twilight obscurity. Here are a few shades that suggest themselves to me at the moment; only the idea, of course, and may be decorated to suit:



In the studio of Bolton Jones is a shade for a large gasolier and reflector, made of burlap, in which has been stitched a simple design and which is edged with some pretty tassels and fringe. It forms a semi-circular curtain, running about the outside of the reflector on rings. The inner part, turned toward the gas, is lined with white, and it transmits something of the glow of the gas jets. A strip of the same material with its top extended forward into the room a few inches and the lower edge caught back toward the window sill, tempers the light of the large studio window.

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Art, decorative as well as pictorial, shows a closer sympathy with and dependence upon nature than it did of yore. It goes to nature for its subjects, and it keeps imagination pure, healthful and restrained, within proper limits; for works of imagination only do not equal the grandeur and beauty of this world, and they only gain in value as they are allied more closely to nature. Yet those who feel interest in art must see reason for gratulation in the fact that in spite of these tendencies toward nature there is nothing that indicates a tendency toward a labored style and mere imitation, for our artists never painted so freely as they do to-day. Not only do we find nature clear in her forms but suggestive in her moods and phases, and the artist or decorator who reads her suggestions most intelligently and with readiest sympathy is the worthiest and greatest in his profession. Mrs. Browning traverses the subject of suggestiveness in art, in these few and suggestive words:

" . . . Art's the witness of what is
Behind this show. If this world's show were all,
Then imitation would be all in art."

The tendency toward a return to nature, after a long period of partial separation from it, is seen in almost every form of art. We see it upon the stage, and remark that there is less of rant and pomposity than there used to be; we see it in literature, and note that a better acquaintance with people, places and things is demanded of the writer than was expected of those who wielded the quill some fifty years or more ago; we see it in poetry, in the strengthening of metaphors; we hear it in music, in the tempestuous breathings of Wagner's northland genius, the graphic symphonies of Raff, and the symphonic poems of St. Saens and Liszt. Especially do we see it in the graphic and decorative arts; natural lines predominate; freedom of design and execution has largely replaced triteness of theme and stiffness of treatment; conventionalized material has a more intimate relation to the objects that suggested it; colors are truer and less glaring; mere ornamental flourish and purposeless garnishing are in their decadence, and a natural basis and reason for things can be seen in almost every piece of decoration.

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Why is it that serpentine, or "serpentine marble," as it is sometimes called, has so nearly disappeared from house interiors? It is a sort of cross between marble and malachite; its rich green varies from black to the pale, luminous emerald of a mid-sea wave crest, and its hard surface admits of brilliant polish. It is therefore one of the most beautiful of materials for clock cases, mantels, and for the decoration of a room where the other fittings are subdued in color; it is more suitable than marble, and may be combined with tile with good effect. Moreover, there is enough of this stone in the Green Mountains to supply the largest current demand.